

The Function of Imaginary Worlds in Modern Children's Literature for Adolescent Women

Lauren Ferguson, English Department, laurenferg2@gmail.com

Background

Children's literature is enamored with the concept of the alternate world, as it allows the imaginative and creative child an engaging place to explore beyond their own world. Furthermore, imaginary areas create spaces for specifically young women readers when the characters exploring them are female themselves. As third wave feminism comes to fruition, it is vital to the understanding of female development that the origins of female actualization is established.

Research Questions

How do imaginary worlds cater to young female readers? How does the world combined with strong female characters benefit young women?



The magical world of Hogwarts, as depicted in the 2001 film *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Courtesy of Warner Brother Entertainment

Methods and Materials

Main goal was to establish an understanding of modern imaginary worlds and how female children utilized them

- Analyzed three popular female characters: Lyra Silvertongue, Hermione Granger, and Violet Baudelaire
- Researched past studies on how children received imaginary worlds
- Examined the phenomenon of the 'alternate reality' of the past decade

Results

Modern magical worlds offer young women an engaging and exciting place to explore femininity.

- Children learn effectively by utilizing the imaginary
- Worlds give female characters unique experiences, allowing the young women who idolize them to find a world to explore their own agency
- Worlds are safe places for young girls to explore their femininity without penalty. Readers see the consequence of negative and positive behavior through a feminine scope.

Conclusion or Discussion

Conclusion/Discussion:

- Imaginary worlds, combined with strong heroines, offer an unique space for young women to grow into strong, resourceful, and compassionate people

Future Directions:

- To further my research, I plan on analyzing Victorian and turn of the century literature, such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone:

"'Neville,' [Hermione] said, 'I'm really, really sorry about this.' She raised her wand. 'Petrificus Totalus!' she cried, pointing [her wand] at Neville."

The Golden Compass:

"[Lyra and Pan] thought Dust must be bad too, because they were grown up and they said so. But what if it isn't? If Dust were a good thing...If it were to be sought and welcomed and cherished...
'We could look for it too, Pan!' [Lyra] said."

The Bad Beginning:

"'A pretty girl like you shouldn't be working backstage.'
'But I'd like to,' Violet said."

Examples of moments of female strength from three primary sources, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, *The Golden Compass*, and *The Bad Beginning*

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the college of liberal arts and the department of English for their research tools, and Dr. MacKay for her unwavering support.

References

- Hogwarts. 2001. Warner Brothers Entertainment. Analyzing Dragons. Web.
- Pullman, Philip. *The Golden Compass*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996. Print.
- Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. New York: Scholastic, 1998. Print.
- Snicket, Lemony. *The Bad Beginning*. New York: Harper Collins, 1999. Print.